

The bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, December 10, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable MARK L. PRYOR, a Senator from the State of Arkansas, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. PRYOR thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader marks, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3590, the health care reform legislation. The time until 1 p.m. today will be equally divided and controlled and will be for debate only, with the time until 11 a.m. controlled between the two leaders or their designees and the remaining time controlled in 30-minute alternating blocks. The majority will control the first block and Republicans will control the next. Senators will be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

I expect the House of Representatives to send a conference report to the Senate this afternoon. When it arrives, we will consider it. If cloture needs to be invoked, the Senate will have to be in session this weekend for a Saturday vote and a Sunday vote in order to complete action on these bills. This bill includes the bills we have tried to complete. We have been held up by the minority on these bills, but we have made progress. The first will be the Transportation appropriations bill, Commerce-Justice-Science, Military Construction, Labor-HHS, financial services, and State-Foreign Operations. That would leave the only remaining bill to be the Defense appropriations bill, which we will do sometime before the end of the year. We hope we can get word from the Republicans today what they want to do. Whatever they want to do, it is in their hands.

Everyone should understand that procedurally, no one can stop us from moving to the appropriations bills. It is bipartisan. We have worked closely with Republicans on this matter. We automatically go off the health care bill when we get on this. We are waiting for the score to come back from the Congressional Budget Office. There isn't a lot we can do until we get that done, which would be next week. So no time is lost on health care. We have to complete our work for the year anyway. So we have to do this bill.

Whenever we hear from the Republicans, Senators will know what their

schedules can be. We could complete our work today and come back and work something out so that we can have a Monday vote. But whatever the Republicans want, we will be happy to cooperate with them—I shouldn't say whatever they want.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

SERVICEMEMBERS HOME OWNERSHIP TAX ACT OF 2009

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3590, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3590) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modify the first-time homebuyers credit in the case of members of the Armed Forces and certain other Federal employees, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Reid amendment No. 2786, in the nature of a substitute.

Dorgan amendment No. 2793 (to amendment No. 2786), to provide for the importation of prescription drugs.

Crapo motion to commit the bill to the Committee on Finance with instructions.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the time until 11 a.m. shall be equally divided and controlled by the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, for the benefit of all Senators, let me lay out today's program. It has been 3 weeks since the majority leader moved to proceed to the health care reform bill. This is the 11th day of debate. The Senate has considered 18 amendments or motions. It has conducted 14 rollcall votes. Today, the Senate will continue debating the amendment by the Senator from North Dakota on prescription drug reimportation, we will continue debating the motion by the Senator from Idaho on taxes, and we will continue debate on the bill. Under the previous order, the time until 1 p.m. today will be for debate only, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees. Beginning at 11 o'clock, Republicans will control the first half hour, and the majority will control the second half hour. We will continue discussions to try to find a way forward.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I appreciate the statistics the Senator from Montana cited about how long we have been debating this and how many amendments we have done. That is how few amendments we have done, actually. The majority is now filibustering their own bill. I have no idea why that is happening. We have been calling for votes on both of these amendments that have been proposed so far and

haven't been able to get the votes. I don't understand how they can talk about how many amendments are being done.

I also have to voice some other frustration. I don't know how many times I have heard the exact same speech by the Senator from Illinois, Mr. DURBIN, on this floor talking about the amount of hours that have been spent together working on these bills in the HELP Committee and the Gang of 6 in the Finance Committee. It isn't about how many hours we spend together. It isn't about how many hours we spend on the floor. It is whether we are accepting ideas. I understand the other party won the last election, but somehow they will have to get over this attitude that they won the election, they get to write the bill, they don't have to take any ideas from anybody else.

In the HELP Committee, I keep pointing out that most of the things we turned in were kind of punctuation corrections and spelling corrections. Any ideas we actually had that appeared to be accepted to be in the bill were ripped out of the bill before it was actually formally printed, without talking to us. What kind of bipartisan deal is that?

Another thing with the HELP Committee, we have only had 10 days of debate on this. We did more than that in the HELP Committee when we were marking up the bill.

But we are having, in the words of Yogi Berra, déjà vu all over again. When we were having that markup, the majority withheld a significant part of the bill, a big part of the bill. It was the government-run option part of the bill. They wouldn't give us the wording on that. I think they were still writing it. Maybe that is what is happening right now too. But we couldn't get the text we were going to write amendments on so that we could deal with the bill. I think America noticed that in August. People said: How come everybody isn't reading the bill? You can't read what you don't have.

The point I am making is, right now the newspapers are full of information—well, speculation; it has to be speculation—about what this new Medicare expansion does. I haven't run into anybody who has seen the text of that. I have asked some of the media, and they didn't see the text. They got a briefing. We haven't even had a briefing. The majority side has had a briefing, but our folks who have talked to those folks said: Wow, that was pretty general. How could you make up your mind on whether you are going to support it based on the little bit of information you received? That is not the way to run any kind of an organization, especially if you want bipartisan votes.

You can't write the bill in secret, which is what was done with this bill. There wasn't a Republican involved in the behind-the-door stuff Leader REID did to put together the bill we have now. That is not bipartisan. There